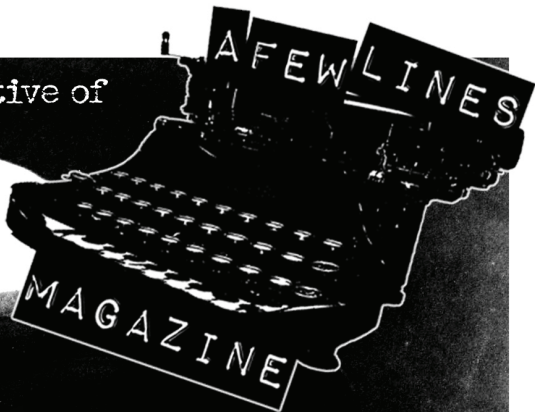


an underground collective of
individual expression



WALT

featuring:

ISSUE I
VOLUME 1

Jim Bennett
Liam Corley, Julian Haladyn
William Matthew McCarter

A Few Lines Magazine

An underground collective of individual expression
Volume I Issue I

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Editorial Staff

Bermuda - Workshop Director

Nick Hart - Editor

Leena Fitzgerald - Copy Editor

Jack Foster - Editorial Manager

Alli Kirkham - Layout Editor/Graphic Designer

Slick Pine - Editor

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Thank you for reading.

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To the Reader,

This issue you are about to read started as an idea formed between two students at Cal Poly Pomona. That idea then formed a name, and that name took four students to the top of a hill. From the top of the hill, the magazine began its transition from the ether of the metaphysical into the concretization of reality. With the addition of two more staff members, and the advice of many great minds, the magazine you are now about to read was created into a substantive piece of literature.

While the magazine could not exist without the efforts of the six editors, they are, without a doubt, of the least importance. The contributors, unpublished and published, who had the courage to send us their work deserve much of the credit for the formation of this inaugural issue. We, the editors, would like to express our deepest thanks for the amazing quality of the work we received over the last few months. We are extremely proud to put forth the work of such talented authors, and we hope you, the reader, will enjoy it as much as we do.

With that being said, we want to express our gratitude to you. You are the reason something like this can exist. Without you, there is no magazine. We appreciate your interest in our magazine, and we sincerely hope that you find something in it that speaks to you on a personal level. Our tagline for our magazine is “an underground collective of individual expression,” and we take that very seriously. If one of these pieces opens a door to a new insight concerning an aspect of your life, then we have succeeded in our efforts to reach out and make a connection with you.

Again, we hope that you enjoy this issue of *A Few Lines*. We know you expect nothing but the best, and that is exactly what you’re getting with our premier issue. Happy reading.

All the best,

The Editors

**To those who made a generous
contribution which enabled us to print our
first issue, we salute you.**

People who Fucking Rock:

David Angelino
Wade Whittaker
Cory Goodin
Bernice & Mitch Killian
Hazel Gonzalez
Lupe Martinez
The Cochran Family
Kim Kuckowicz
Briana Ruvalcaba
Cameron Lund
Ashley Evans
Derek Glassick
Liam Corley
Stephanie Belen

It is very difficult to get a start-up magazine off the ground, and the contributions you have made have allowed us to get a good head start in the process of making *A Few Lines* an institution instead of something a few kids from Pomona put together on a whim. We are grateful for your patronage and we sincerely hope that our continued performance will meet with your satisfaction and continuing delight.

- The Editors

If Not I Then Who

You see a man, and You form a thought.
A man sees You and he forms a wall.

I see a man and form myself.

He is not he but me and if not I then who.

I wonder,
what if this is a dream.

A skeptic once raised to me that I could be a brain in a vat.

I guess I could but if I am then,

Then there is nothing;
everything is an allusion and all meaning is lost.

I am alone.

All I am is a mess of neurotic neurons and cynical synapses in
a vat of viscous vermouth.

But,
I am free.

Free of worries, free of pain, hurt and depression, in this void
vacuum which is my mind.

Empty and Blank is my world.

I its sole inhabitant;
I its sole protector.

I am the artist to which sight is my brush,
and with each sweeping glance I capture allusive algorithms,
slight subtleties and minute nuances which strike with each
sight.

These envelope me in myself.

They send me out across a vast voluminous expanse of my
mind.

You see a man and You form a thought.
A man sees You and he forms a wall.

A man sees me and he sees himself.

For if not I, then who.

-Bermuda

Coffee Stain

An empty eggshell coffee mug still smells of grounds no matter how many times it runs through the dishwasher, retains light brown stains from bottom-dwelling dregs. Saliva smear across its rim, which skims skin from lips and leaves them twitching against the heat. Held by ear-shaped handle, kissing each customer that sits and sips and scans a newspaper through its steam. Passes embraces between bankers and brokers and cabbies and bakers and cops. A buck forty-five.

A dried barnacle clings to sea salt like ship hulls and harbours traces of leftover seafoam in its crust. Cradles the ledge next to sugar and cream and it cusses as they spill from their cups. Creases and folds hold hairs inside follicles carved by crab claws, scuttling in search of safe sands. Double double. Pumpkin spice cappuccino. Semibalanus balanoides. The barnacle brushes fingertips and sends brine through veins up spines and influences a customer into asking, "What's this?"

A dime tumbles from the countertop, glints against fluorescent lights and tinkles when it touches the tile. Ten cents a topple, a half-full mug hits the floor, shatters, splashes murky slush over the Bluenose and capsizes the coin beneath the brine of ground brown beans. Queen Elizabeth II (D·G·REGINA), face down and safe below deck. Server swears like a barnacle, sweeps shards to the side and soaks up the spill with a white serviette. She answers the customer, "Barnacle, or something. Fuck, look at my shoes."

Aluminium carabiner out of rhythm, black and chrome exclamation mark.

Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia, propped up with pockmarks in the white lighthouse on ice-slicked 2D Atlantic rocks. Four seagull m's against grey clouds, like those covering the café. The customer lifts the shale canvas and asks, "Need help cleaning it up?" Her fingertips slide along ribs and rivulets and trace the painting's jagged edges. The only aroma that of spilled coffee and dusted cinnamon. She sighs salty sweat and coffee stains. Longs to smell the sea.

-Braydon Beaulieu

Unturned Pages

Once I gave you a copy of Thompson's *The Rum Diary*,
do you remember that? Of course you do, it was just last summer.
I said read it, read it, it will change your life,
and you expressed such excitement,

It drove me crazy that you wouldn't read it,
Why haven't you read it? I would ask angrily, just read it already,
and you would insist that you would, That you just hadn't found the
time,
I wanted to talk to you about it, but, I held back, because you had to
read it first,

Once I gave you a copy of Sylvia Plath's *Ariel*,
do you remember that? I'm sure you do, it meant so much to me,
I said read it, read it, it will change your life,
and you expressed such excitement,

I wanted to grab you and shake you when you hadn't read it,
They are short poems, so easy to read, I'd declare, just read them,
and you insisted you would,
I so badly wanted to talk to you about them, but, I held back be-
cause...

Now, you sit contently on my closet shelf with a copy of a book you
had read.
I remember you once gave me a copy of Percy Shelley's poems.
Do you remember?
You said read it, read it, it will change your life.
And I had every intention.

You seemed disappointed when I hadn't read it.
Oh read him, you'd say. Just read him.
And I would insist that I would. That I just hadn't found the time.
And you wanted to discuss him with me more. But, you didn't.

And now, even Shelley's pages do not get turned by you.
I check in on you every day to see if the cover's been bent.
And now I want so badly to talk to you about Shelley.
But, you have nothing to say.

To Dad
-Leena Fitzgerald

Intaglio Landscape 102.33 x 78.8 (rows of corn)

Stripped of all meaning
seemingly endless rows of corn
separating cities from each other

seemingly endless rows of words
parade themselves
shamelessly across every conceivable
architectural surface

a ready-made instrument
of the most deterministic sort

enabling forms of correspondence
with rows of illustrations

images arranged in lines
suspended in the margins of the document
occupying a vast landscape of ink

a lacunae in mid-sentence
death in the middle of silence

he knew who the murderer was
but forgot to tell anyone
before going on vacation

hidden in an attic somewhere
between guilt and
load barring walls

between cities and
grandparents' memories

correspondence between two individuals
unknown to one another

until they meet by chance
in the endless rows of corn
in the middle of a science project

endless rows of words suspended
images held in the gap

the murderer self-publishes
all of his documents
on a small 17th century letterpress

correspondence that is printed on nice paper
using various mechanical reproductive means

-Julian Haladyn

Atlas and his Gang

It was early in the morning, or very late at night, when we finally stumbled back through the deserted streets. The scattered streetlights were only half-functional, and their eerie fluorescent glow filled the air with a sort of artificiality. Fog rolled in from the countryside to meet the urbanized vein of the road as we, the only group of Americans, attempted to find our way home. A long night of drunken debauchery had ended with us being thrown out of a Karaoke Bar, and as we made our way into the back alley, we swore and spat, completely intending not to return to such a dumpy place...at least until the next night.

My vision was blurred as a result of an excess of cheap rice wine, and the rest of the group, singing "Bohemian Rhapsody," staggered through the street as random men on mopeds made their way into the fog. As their bodies began to take form, they would stare at us in a strange sort of awe until their shadowy silhouettes dissolved into the uncertainty of the night. Each step we took was a step into a completely new world. Each step created the next, and the step after that created the world we would find ourselves somehow a part of.

(We stuck out like sore thumbs.)

Even with the denseness of the fog and the absence of any real light, we were seen as outsiders. We were outsiders. Roaming the streets we couldn't pronounce the names of. Too drunk to see straight. Too apathetic to hold a conversation outside song lyrics. Touching from a distance. Dancing in the streets. Puking in the bushes. Claiming everything as if it were our own.

It was at this point, with the shining of the neon lights, the sound of slurred English, the murmuring of muddled Mandarin, the honking of incessant horns, the sprinkling of rain, the wafting of spice, and the feeling of humidity filling the cracks of my lips, that I felt like I had somehow been transported to the South Pole, and I was being crushed by the immense weight of the Earth, yet at the same time supporting it on its axis by my feet. It was at this point that I felt entirely and devastatingly alone.

-Jack Foster

5 O' Clock News

Blackness tickles the wall
as it creeps, invisible,
bouncing on the parameters
which hold in place so tight,
A man.

With the shades drawn
the sun is hidden.
All illumination is blocked within.
Aside from meager legs of light
which dare to make stride through
the slim cracks of the shutters
offering a hand of hope and escape,
The man,
is isolated behind his walls.

Entrapment is a lifestyle,
one so many choose to endure.
The contamination of over-dwelling in walled spaces
and the sanctity found behind closed doors.
The disease of it all, spread by the discharges of
a cold metallic box which spews forth
factual information through sight and sound.

Decreasing the light in the room,
The man,
now entranced by picture
is contained
Vast voids of space
are plowed into his mind
a depth, appeased only by sight
of complex explosion, simplicity fades.

The sticky floor pains movement,
and the cracked mirror allows for no reflection
no association with the self.
The door, a gateway of escape, much too far now,
and the mass has been converted.
Sucked in.

The man,
overexposed to a glassy screen,
loses his mind
as his favorite station begins to broadcast.
The clock ticks, 5:01.

-Nick Hart

Trickster

ticktocticktoctick
The coyote's ears twitch
Back and forth
The Semaphore of his skittishness and
He does not look to either side
And he does not care.

I am heavy and swift and
Mechanical and preposterous and
Modern, steel and rubber,
Incomprehensible, a superfluous
Invader of the flatlands,
And the coyote doesn't care.

He is a scrawny sack of fur
And not much flesh and
He can't spare the time to look
Because he is eternal and weak,
A scavenger and a god and a
Storyteller, the joker-mogul of
A thousand myths,
Vast and beyond my world
And so, so old and tired
So what should he care for me.

ticktoctick
He has not sped or slowed
I have kept my pace
There is no impact
Our paths have only crossed,
Above and beneath the shadows of the sodium lights
Seconds apart,
Before he fades with a final
ticktock of his ears
And a twitch of his tail
Into the darkness of an alley.

-Alli Kirkham

Dripping Dry Words (A Song of Rage)

I would say you're too sensitive
But it's too hard to make you climax
Maybe I could take you to new heights
If only I could reach your heart with my penis

I rest my face – the one that belongs to you –
On the weakness of your neglected breast
And think of ways to make you a better person.

You are the queen of the ants,
And I am your biggest threat.
I bumble by, an awkward anteater
With a long stiff snout perfect for probing,
Thrusting my pointed tongue deep into your kingdom.
You watch from deep down inside your sanctuary
As my slippery tongue slides in and out,
Oozing as it glides by, carrying the tiny
Pieces of you stuck to its sticky sticky snout.
Let me be your king, O almighty ant queen;
I can protect us from myself.

-Slick Pine

Skin deep

as we make love
he loiters in those corners
which will never be mine
dawdles on the skirting edge
lingers on the top of a wardrobe
while my cloths dangle
across a chair back

A discarded bus ticket
from a journey he once took
found between the pages of a book
the special pan he cooked noodles in
and a luminous kipper tie
forgotten in the bottom
of your washing basket

and always he lies down with us
alive
inside your closed eyes
he screws you again.

-Jim Bennett

Where God Is

Tall grass sways in waves,
 bending forward in light,
roots of trees entangled
 like lovers at midnight.

We surrender our desires,
 willingly lost in the
jungles of time and adolescence,
 God descending in photons,

in nature like our mother's womb,
 soon the skeletons of adulthood
manifesting themselves in the
 weight of books of taxes,

in the glum looks of the living dead
 carrying themselves on the streets
grudgingly, their eyes starved of
 passion, heart, love, mind,

of the radiance that rains on
 us in the forest where ambition
ceases, where we parade into the
 pastures like lions.

And every few moments a plane
 passes overhead, reminds us of
man's world, the sound of metal
 breaking through sky.

We hold a stare with coyotes then,
 crystal eyes like stars in the cosmos,
sharing a consubstantiality of
 embraced vulnerability,

planes disappearing into the dark
atmosphere in flashes of lightning,
smoke trails in strokes of technology,
carbon footprints in the heavens,

when our only home for millennia
was this: the sounds of beetles
scurrying, leaves fluttering in the spirit
of high school sweethearts,

a renaissance of passion in the wind,
dirt sliding in avalanches
as we traverse the terrain, our feet
corroding sediments of time

in an upheaval of buried memories,
having forgotten what it was to
be children, wanderers of hillsides
in summer afternoons

when all we wanted was to bask
in the magic of light,
in warmth like our mother's touch,
a hand descending from the sky

to nurture our minds in the
ways of simplicity through
blustery breezes that scour
the landscape for perceivers.

And when we leave the hills,
when we wander off to metal,
to cars and homes and desks,
to the wheels of motion,

we will remember that God
is in the photons.

-Ryan David Leack

Tradition

A good poem, by which I mean an American one,
 need not enlighten the world from a providential hill.
 Since so little depends on the self-reliance we preach,
 our pretenses can relax two-bits about the rights of man.
 I, for one, am tired of assuming atoms which belong to me
 as good belong to you, and I pay no debts when I praise
 blasted roses we should have dead-headed days ago.
 Heat overcame so quickly that petals were preserved,
 their crisp, irregular hues a drained purple and ocher stain
 like dregs adorning last night's cup. I am equally pleased
 by the absence of mail from the government agency that loaned me funds
 to complete an education I have used for selfish and defensible ends.

Too many of us, by which I mean poets, are chicken about meaning little,
 concerned that the commonness of our commonplaces are too rank.
 I, on the other ham, am anxious for nothing, cast cares after gardyloo,
 and lie in my own made bed, too much pig to root in the universal poke.

-Liam Corley

Friday Mourning

"Oh my, he *does* look quite pale. Don't you know *everyone* will notice?"

"Is it any wonder why his wife hasn't been near him all night?"

"They *are* a queer couple, him dead, and her, nowhere to be found during the wake."

The two widows, Mrs. Crotchet and Mrs. Bird, continued to scrutinize every detail of the Genovese house, from the gilded moldings to the white-washed walls that seemed to mirror the complexions of every woman attending.

The poor Mr. Genovese had tragically passed away during an exceptionally vigorous performance with his mistress, Ms. Ribald. The landlord had found him in the morning, stiff and cold. He reported it as a natural death, leaving out the dishonoring details.

Mr. Genovese's wife, Edna, had not wallowed in sorrow or mourning, but became angered at her late husband for leaving her with such an abundance of debt. The money left to her had hardly been enough for the funeral arrangements, new car, new furnishings, and new clothes. She had to release three of her servants just to be practical. It truly was a pity.

Mr. Genovese was dressed, upon his wife's request, in his favourite blue blazer and matching slacks, and lay as contently as he did the night he perished. Edna fluttered about the room, flitting from guest to guest, deciding it to be the appropriate time to steep herself in their pity.

"Edna, how *are* you getting on with the loss of John?"

She couldn't place a name to the face, but concluded that if she had been invited, she must be important.

"I suppose I'm dealing with it in my own way. I have decided to renovate the entire estate after today. John was the only one who had appreciation for this hideously dated, French décor."

"Oh, that *does* seem the right thing to do. At least he looks presentable for all of his friends...though I couldn't help but notice he is a little fallow."

"You know John; the man never had *any* colour in his severe little face. I took it upon myself to choose his outfit; I knew John simply adored that coat, and it only seemed proper for him to be buried in it."

"I dare say; it *is* a striking coat. I don't believe there could be anything worse than appearing dead *and* disheveled. John is lucky that you are so proper. Isn't that your mother-in-law? Oh, I wonder how she is getting on."

"Yes, that is her; I wonder what she is doing here? Reproachful hag that she is!"

Edna tramped towards the casket where her mother-in-law had begun mumbling violently.

"What is it you think you are doing here, Margery?" The over-wrought mother turned in disbelief, glaring malevolently at Edna.

"How dare you speak to me that way? And how dare you dress my son in this tattered blue coat? You know just as well as I do that his favourite coat was tan, the one I gave him for Christmas last year, from London. I have brought it with me, and I expect him to be wearing it."

The two argued furiously, the spectacle drawing the attention of every eye in the home. A man approached dressed in an exquisite cerulean suit, French cuffed, starched, white shirt and leather-soled wing-tips. The generously proportioned man ambled over to the two tactless women and dared to infuse some reason and civility into the scene.

"Is there, perhaps, anything I might do for either of you?" The man offered.

"Oh...Hello David, are you having a pleasant time?"

Edna recognized the man to be David Charon, one of John's friends from the club. She remembered John talking about him after a bawdy night at the pub, remarking on how he could drink three bottles of ale at once. The man was a legend among the ill-reputed, and a nuisance to the respectable. He prided himself on having liaisons with more than one of the women in the room, some of whose frequent visits had grown tiresome.

"I was just wondering what you two were bickering about; you are causing quite the scene."

"Well, you see, it's a matter of significant importance. I, as John's troubled and grief-riddled wife, only want what is best for him, and that is for him to be buried in his favourite blue blazer..." Her eyes began to tear, more ersatz than emotional.

"I'm sure you, as a friend of John's, had heard him talk about his favourite blazer; perhaps one of the nights at the pub?"

"You manipulating harlot! I hope you choke on your lies; you are try-

ing to keep an old woman from being happy. My boy would have wanted to be buried in his hand tailored, tan blazer. That blue coat is shaming his reputation."

David thought that there could not be any more shame heaped upon this man's memory that hadn't been brought on by these two tactless shrews. The two women returned to their quarreling, the mother pawing at the body to try to slip the blue jacket from her son's body. The guests gasped in horror and disbelief at the actions of these *civilized* people. How is it that people could act so churlish? Edna followed suit, and clawed at the body, trying to fasten the coat around her husband's shoulders. David watched in disbelief, wondering if the two women would stop before the casket collapsed. He turned and walked to the back of the room, approaching a slender man he was acquainted with from the club.

"Can you believe this, Wollesley? I never thought I would live to see the day when two people fought over the appearance of a dead man. Do you *ever* remember John talking about his 'favourite blazer'?"

"Yeah, sure do. Don't you remember? He talked about it *all* the time; it was the black one."

-Eric William Strege

i am Nothing, and You are

i am nothing
i am not an actor
i am not a solider
i am not a CEO

i am not an adult.

You are [Blank]

You
Can be painted

You can be molded and You can be...
[insert here]

For if i am nothing, Then You can be anything.

[insert here]
You can be molded and You can be...

Can be painted
You

You are [Blank]

i am not an adult.

i am not a CEO
i am not a solider
i am not an actor
i am nothing

i am Nothing, and You are -

-Bermuda

Busted

I'd rather be
the old man
drinking
the smaller bottle
of an old time
sour mash,
placed discretely
in my blazer pocket,
mischievously nipping the end,
when catching my hot wife
off guard.

I'd imagine it to look
something like a child
grabbing a cookie
from the jar.
And just like
smeared chocolate
my breath
would give it
away.

I'd rather have
the hot wife
that reacts with a kiss.
Then shortly after,
grabs the bottle,
takes a long one,
slaps my stupid face,
and chucks it as far as she can.
Reminding me
how dumb I can be,
all while showing
exactly why
I love her.

-Dagher Dagher

Home Alone

on the table he tries to peer out
tasting the gentle air—
in the living room you left the television on

through the blinds a soft white light
spills across the blue-dark den
outside scurries of squirrels bark
he licks curved yellow cuspid

that collar jingles like a cowbell
with the clatter of claws against your tile—
your hardwood floors

“the price of oil continues to spiral upward
but the president assures us the economy is fine”
from the sunken beige sofa
twists pricked ears and head

poor little guy—
the lack of thumbs,
even he gets sick of the O’Riley factor

-Madison Jones

Stranger Fits of Passion Have I Known

Brimming – just the curve of that first letter
 Of the word that describes my need for skin
 Makes me want a new body to break in –
 In a tighter shape than you ever were.
 But there will still even be one better;
 I can see her curves like ripples of sin
 Forming in my miserable mind when,
 Looking at you, I think of surreal her.

Will I be happy with hens in my head?
 No one dream ever better than the last,
 I will never find my satisfaction.
 Priapus*, with the love-lust that he bred
 When he used his pride to beat that ass,
 Gave birth to the world's longest stiffest pun.

-Slick Pine

*Priapos, according to Greek mythology, is a god of fertility and male genitalia, among other things. Most significantly, he is said to maintain a continuous erection.

In Ovid's *Fasti*, a nymph, Lotis, passes out in a drunken stupor at a feast. Priapus attempts to take advantage of the drunken nymph, but a donkey alerts her. The donkey's "betrayal" is punished by means of a fatal beating from Priapus' gargantuan erection, while Lotis is turned into a lotus flower.

Priapus' legacy is often immortalized through various monuments with quotations such as:

"... If I do seize you . . . you shall be so stretched that you will think your anus never had any wrinkles."

The Wall

Peeling plaster
makes pictures when you
look closely
and while you make me pull down my pants
and lie across the table
I have time to look
I saw a heard of elephants once
pounding a dusty land
each footstep pounding
pounding pounding me with every step
another time I saw
a flock of birds wing wide
flying across the sky
somewhere far away.

The wall became my cinema
each crack and lifting flake
join into shadows
making pictures move
across the surface

I don't think
I ever hated you as much
as the day you took me in
and made me face
your newly painted wall

-Jim Bennet

EXALTED IN BEGINNINGS

It extends
 a measure of illumination
 a wick
 exalted in transition
 inducing conversation engorged with misconception
 Eyes fixate
 then follow
 An exchange of pleasantries
 the harbinger
 abridged
 to an innocuous advent
 With less than urgency
 utterings dissolve into noise
 saturating orifices
 under the pretense of importance
 Inspired by disregard
 the wick withers
 light embarks on a journey
 unhurried
 to a nameless terminus
 and this begins
 the reasoning of your infamy
 I am a bystander
 a forced role
 unfamiliar
 nonnegotiable
 and it has to do with this picture

-Calvin Pennix



Jennifer Yung



Folds III



Alli Kirkham

Downtown Brooklyn - 1953

A fragile frame of sepia notes,
 Before the reds of our eyes
 Revealed the ones that
 Lie beneath,
 Held in the hollow
 Of a hand of the grandchild
 Long removed.

A different juncture,
 A duplicated jawline.
 An imperfect imprint
 Slightly altered by the mingling
 Of an inter-changing gene-pool.
 Like peering through a
 Foggy looking glass
 The snapshot mirrors the awkward spasm,
 The silent exchange of pretty words
 And, most importantly, the
 Refrain.

Evidence corroborated by conspirators,
 Connected by a thing we call kin,
 Bound in tomes for all to see,
 So everyone who shares green eyes
 And passed-down names
 Can see the wreck from whence they came.
 So everyone can feel the viscous shame
 Slouching through communal veins.

-Jack Foster

RUPTURES WITH SPONTANEITY

I exercise the demons
in the folds of my neck

muttering factoids
invisible under a breath

in freezing temperatures

In an ageless time
the adhesive loosens its grip

when the pillows horizontal stripes run vertical in
repetition

There's a rupture in my post-existence
which functions with
spontaneity

dormant quakes

erupts

obliteration obliterates obligation

The toll has been taken

sending shockwaves

for again
I become invisible to myself

-Calvin Pennix

On The Road in '94

"I woke up to the sound of pouring rain..." Not exactly, but that's what was blasting out of John's speakers as I slowly opened my eyes and struggled to recall just exactly what my position in the world was. My internal GPS satellite device was hazy at best and I tried desperately to get the dendrite snails of my mind to cleanse the filthy fish tank of my current perception of reality. Just as Sebastian Bach screamed out "I'll Remember You," on the stereo, Polaroid memories of the night before began to creep back into my memory.

"Look who is back from the dead," John said as I walked into the kitchen, grabbed an old stained plastic Taco Bell cup out of the dish drain and poured myself a tall glass of Luzianne sun tea.

"Back from the dead," I asked, not recalling and not really wanting to recall whatever might have happened the night before.

"Don't you remember," John said, "No, wait... of course you don't. You were too fucked up. You need to thank me for rescuing your ass from the clutches of Salt and Pepper."

"From where," I asked, still trying to kick start the dendrite snail into removing the fish tank film and the magic mouth to blow on the Polaroid memory in hopes that I might develop a picture of reality a little bit faster.

"Salt and Pepper's place," John said, "They called me and said you were passed out half-naked on the floor of one of the bedrooms and they knew we had to go out on the road today."

John was my oldest friend and

I loved him like a brother, but I couldn't stand it when he said those three words, "On The Road."

"We were born too late to be on the road," I said, "We ain't Huck and Jim out on the mighty Mississippi or Sal Paradise driving across the country. We're just half of *Empty Pockets* and are going to be gone from this trendy little cabin in the woods that your landlord named 'Katydid' for three days."

"This ain't the *Empty Pockets* Summer of 1994 World Tour," I barked, before taking another drink of sun tea, still trying to kick that fucking snail into overdrive.

"Look, they're mini road trips," John said, sort of backing off his *On The Road* statement, but still trying to emphasize the importance of it all, "but you gotta quit makin' light of this. We're a road band now. That's all we ever wanted."

"That's not all we ever wanted. But I guess it's about all we can hope for – a simulacrum of being, as you say," and I held up my hands mockingly making a set of quotation marks in the air, "on the road."

"Alright, you've been passed out cold for hours and are probably still drunk. Did you just make up that simulator word?"

"Simulacrum," I said, purposely enunciating, "is a copy of a copy. It's a parody of the original. All I am saying is there isn't enough of whatever it was that ole Sal Paradise set out to find to even bother looking for anymore. Whitman's America was long gone when Kerouac went looking for it, and it's definitely not out there now."

"Where did you learn a word like simulacrum anyway?"

"*Dennis Miller Live*," I said as I drank the sun tea, hoping that the caffeine would rush to my head fast enough to kick that snail in the ass so that I could fully reengage with the world.

"Billy, you gotta get it together," John said.

I looked at him with my filthy fish tank eyes, swallowed a handful of aspirin and said, "Did it ever occur to you that if I had it together, I might be doing something else?"

"Is that why you're the singer in this band," John asked, "because you can't do anything else?"

"That and the fact that I can get more pussy doing this job than the guy who sells cancer policies to widows.

"By the way, did any of those girls tell you if I got laid last night," I asked as I walked across the floor of the kitchen toward the bathroom.

I heard John say, "You're pathetic," as I turned on the water to the shower.

Gently, I lathered the soap up in my hands – that same soap that would wash off the funk of what remained of my latest dalliance – that little piece of a woman that you take with you when you leave – and the nebulous opaque and gray film of the Polaroid memories began to take shape. Once again, I began to take possession of my personal narrative:

Tricky Rick called yesterday afternoon and said that the sea hag had a bottle of Scooby Snacks for us. The sea hag was what we called our drug

connection. She was like nearly all of the forty-something white trash women in Piankashaw, Missouri – "Rode hard and put away wet," the old-timers called it – rode hard one too many times both by the men in their lives and the world around them. A broken soul left on the slag heap of history. She wasn't the welfare queen in the Cadillac that you hear about on the news, but she was definitely a welfare dowager of sorts who, over time, had learned how to live off of what old Uncle Sugar sent her every month in the form of an AFDC check and food stamps.

Tragically, two years ago, her oldest son was killed by a drunk driver as he was walking across the highway to Snaggletooth's General Store. As a result, the sea hag was on Medicaid and the doctor prescribed Valium for her anxiety and continued to give her refills to this day. I don't think that she ever took a single pill. Rick and I had been buying them from her for well over a year now. These were no ordinary Valium either, they were the good ones – the purple kind – 10mg. Whenever she would get her script filled at the drug store, she would give Ricky a call. Uncle Sugar from Medicaid would give him and Ricky and I would take away for twenty dollars worth of Bingo money.

As we backed out of the sea hag's driveway, Ricky and I both chewed up a couple of V's and decided to stop by Quantrill's Bar and Grill to see Sweet-back and James playing some music in the lounge. It was the 4th of July weekend in the Piankashaw Valley and I figured that nearly everyone

would be down on the Piankashaw River, but somehow, Sweet and Jim convinced Mary Lou, the owner of Quantrill's, to book them in there on Thursday, Friday and Saturday night. They had a two piece act with most of the background music sequenced on a synthesizer. That was how they managed to fit in the tiny lounge at Quantrill's.

Empty Pockets was supposed to play out in the beer garden on Sunday the 4th. Helen Beck, our new manager and booking agent, got us the gig. That fact, alone, made me glad that we had this new management deal with Helen. Mary Lou was a bitch. Nearly all of the club owners I have known in my twenty three years on this big blue marble have been mother fuckers, but Mary Lou was the mother of all motherfuckers. I had a long and checkered past with Mary Lou and I was glad that Helen had to deal with her from now on.

From what I could remember, there were a lot of folks out at Quantrill's for a Thursday night. Tricky Ricky and I rubbed shoulders with our fellow Piankashaw locals, drank lots of draft beer and got pretty fucked up. Ricky took off just after the first set and about that same time, my cousin Roscoe, the bass player in our band, showed up with a gram of crank. We did a couple of lines off the hood of Sweet's truck and it was some really good shit. The valium, the beer and the speed had all mingled together in such a way that I was so fuckin' high, I'd have to climb a flight of steps to scratch my own balls.

Miss Potosi - at least that's what I always called her - I couldn't even remember her real name - came by about

midnight and I left Quantrill's with her and went over to Salt and Pepper's place. I think we fucked - because I was washing little dried smegmas off of my cock and they were running down the drain. I felt reasonably certain that I would remember the rest of the story eventually, but not right now, the Polaroid was still too nebulous and gray. Besides, the hot water felt good on my neck and shoulders and I've always been more interested in the experiential now than yesterday or tomorrow. Tomorrow can wait until I catch up with it and yesterday, well, it's yesterday - nostalgia - more Polaroid memories that come and go, waxing and waning in the nebulous gray matter of the mind. Goddamn that hot water feels good.

After I got out of the shower, I was beginning to cleanse the fish tank of the mind and find my place among the shipwrecked fixtures with all of the other bottom feeders. Now that I had cleansed my body, it was time to give my soul a whore bath - you splash water on all the parts that smell like feet and ass and hope for the best. Today, I felt that my soul was bathing in the dirty sink of a truck stop - the greasy spoon attached to the Flying J along the interstate to the journey to the center of the mind.

I walked outside wearing my favorite pair of sweat pants, an old bootleg Billy Squier tee shirt that I bought at the Route 67 Flea Market, and a pair of Indian moccasins that Roscoe had given me because they wouldn't fit him and sat down on the front steps of "Katydid," drinking my iced tea, and surveying the work that was going on in front of me.

A.J., our lead guitar player, and Roscoe were loading their stuff up into the bandwagon. John was up front, checking the oil and the other fluids under the hood. Everyone was running around doing their jobs like a finely tuned machine and here I was, sitting on the front steps, running on two cylinders, backfiring like a motherfucker and waiting for the caffeine to kick in.

My timing was off, so I lit a Marlboro – my first of the day – took a drag and exhaled as I quietly stared across the yard and looked reality in the eyes with a sense of wonder and disbelief. Our band, *Empty Pockets*, had been playing all the local roadhouses for months. Before that, we had each been playing in roadhouses for years, and now, we finally landed an artist management deal with Helen Beck, a former intern at Contemporary Productions. In a little more than half an hour, we would be leaving “Katydid” for a three-day, six gig road trip in Southeast Missouri.

Somehow, it all seemed so unreal, almost imaginary. I looked over at the converted ’69 Ford Ambulance that we affectionately called *the bandwagon* and it seemed even more unreal. Who tours Southeast Missouri, criss-crossing the state, barnstorming barrooms in a twenty-five year old customized ambulance? I’d always dreamed of stardom. The land, the band, the bandwagon and I were all intrinsically connected to our own reality – we fit together. That’s why it all seemed to work – order in the chaos – the roadhouse where we got our start was *Hard Times*, our band was *Empty Pockets* – *Hard Times*

and *Empty Pockets* – a ying and a yang – a perfect fit – a matching pair spun by the *nous* and you just can’t fuck with that shit. It’s pointless – hopeless. But that’s exactly what we were about to do. *Empty Pockets*, and all our hillbilly hubris, was about to embark upon a journey that would no doubt bring us a little too close to the sun.

I finished my cigarette as John fired up the bandwagon and said, “Lazarus, come forth.” Languidly, I walked across the grass and got in the passenger side of the bandwagon. John pulled out of the driveway and we left “Katydid” in the rear view mirror. Slowly, it faded into a Polaroid memory into the nebulous gray mind, disappearing through the doors of my perception. I looked at the plastic Joe Camel head that I glued to the dashboard and thought, “Yeah, Joe... I know we are all a bunch of blind men from Thebes, but it’s better than being a hopeless one in our sleepy little Pankashaw Valley, so let the wheel of fortune spin.” I thought I might have seen him nod, so I looked at him and thought, “Joe, are you ready to wrestle with the gods and smite the sounding furrows?” Joe Camel just sat in silence, staring back at me through a pair of lapis-lazuli wayfarer sunglasses and quietly smoked a cigarette.

Johnny pulled into the parking lot of a little piece of Americana on the old Route 67 highway. At the corner of Old Route 67 and Old Route 72 in Fredericksburg, Missouri is *The Pig*, a one of kind drive-in restaurant known among the locals as one of the best places in the country to get a pulled pork barbecue sandwich. Directly above our heads, right next to the menu, there

was a hand painted sign that read, "The Pig Since 1948," and featured a painted logo with Porky, the mascot of *The Pig*. Porky looked very close to the old *Piggly Wiggly* pig. In fact, the only substantial difference between ole Porky and ole Piggly is that Porky was sporting a Rebel uniform complete with the gray kepi of the Confederate soldier and ole Porky's portrait had a Confederate flag for the backdrop.

Places like *The Pig* were small restaurants and cafes that represent the best of the golden era of America's roadside restaurants. Once upon a time, *The Pig* was located on some prime real estate at the crossroads of Route 67 and Route 72. *The Pig* came of age with the automobile. In fact, other than the car dealerships in town, no one has a closer affiliation with the car, in and around Pankashaw County, than *The Pig*. In the mid 1960's, they built the new highway 67 through rural Fredericksburg and when the new highway took the place of old Route 67, *The Pig* went from being a restaurant on a major highway to an old anachronism condemned to a life on Yesterday Street.

Before John had a chance to shut off the engine, the car hop, order pad in hand, came walking out to the bandwagon. Ordinarily, I would say that it was a capital offense to pass through Fredericksburg without stopping off for a pulled pork sandwich at *The Pig*, but I was still tired and hung over and every time I thought of one of *The Pig's* pulled pork sandwiches, I thought of that scene in *Weird Science* when Wyatt's brother Chet, played by Bill Paxton, asked him if he wanted a nice, greasy, pork sandwich and I felt like throwing up. Sometimes, when we would stop by *The Pig*,

Johnny would often say the lines from the film. We had seen it a million times over at Bubba's house. Back in the days before even poverty came with cable television, we had to watch movies on the VCR when we were bored. *Weird Science* was Bubba's favorite cure for boredom – next to porn.

Since a nice, greasy, barbecued pork sandwich on a poppy seed bun wasn't particularly appealing to me, I figured that while AJ, John, and Roscoe were waiting on their food, I could slide across the street to the gas station/ liquor store and pick up a bottle of whiskey. I figured, "Fuck it, I've been working diligently for a couple of hours to clear my head up. Since that didn't seem to work, I might as well just fuck it up again - a little hair of the dog that bit me."

I had a little bit of cash on me and knew that I would be getting paid later on that day, so I decided to splurge on some real whiskey instead of the asphalt stripper that I usually drank. "I'll have a bottle of 1843," I said to the clerk as I tossed a ten dollar bill onto the counter. After the clerk gave me my change, I walked into the bathroom, washed my face and ate a couple of the Valiums that Ricky and I had scored the night before. I opened up the '43, took a large pull off the bottle and then felt the slow burning of the amber fluid in my throat and on down into my belly. The first shot always went down a little rough. I had to shake my head a few times just to get through it. I took my third pull off the bottle as I was walking across the street toward the band wagon. Soon, I began to feel almost like one of the living and for the first time that day, I thought I was actually going to enjoy it.

By the time I got back into the van, the carhop had already brought the food out and put it in a little metal tray on the window. Even the trays had ole Porky's face on it. Chuck Berry was playing "Maybelline" on *The Pig's* jukebox. There were a few booths inside where you could drop a quarter in the table top jukebox and play just about any hit from the 50's, 60's and 70's. On the weekends, the antique car collectors would party at *The Pig* and on occasion, they would even have bike night for the motorcycle enthusiasts. *The Pig* was like one of those picturesque icons of 1950's America – all ducktails and poodle skirts – the very image that the conservatives like to conjure up when they start talking about where America went wrong. It was almost sacrilegious for me to be sitting in the van drinking whiskey, waiting for the drugs to kick in.

In the jukebox of our collective American dreams, *The Pig* was everything that was right with the world and everything that was right could be easily explained with a barbecued pork sandwich topped off with coleslaw – Memphis style. In actuality, it was an American anachronism caught like a deer in the headlights of the dawning of the twenty-first century. When we stop off for a visit at *The Pig*, we know that we are living in an age that is somewhere between progress and the world we used to know. When we are at *The Pig*, we are out here on the Americana borderlands where the bikers and the wanna be bikers on their motorcycles, the hippies and the wanna be hippies with their

long hair and dope, and the farmers and the wanna be farmers with their pearl snap shirts, cowboy boots, and Wrangler jeans can all come together under the banner of the Confederate flag and celebrate the fact that we are all anachronisms, caught somewhere between yesterday and tomorrow.

"I'll drink to that," I said to myself as I took another pull off the bottle. Out the window, I saw a young, drop dead gorgeous pair of legs and then a pair of cut off jeans cut right up to home plate, climbing out the window of a red Camaro. I never liked people who drove Camaros. There was this unclean bourgeois aura that Camaros seemed to give off – an aura that said, "If my owner had more money, I'd be a Corvette." I hated just about everything that had to do with the bourgeois middle class, but of course there were exceptions to every rule and I was gawking at one when I suddenly realized that those gorgeous pair of legs belonged to none other than Helen Beck, our new manager.

"Sorry I'm running late, guys," Helen said, laughing carelessly, smiling a stunning Colgate smile that sailed across the bandwagon right into the empty recesses of my soul, as she sat gracefully down on the milk crate that often served as an extra passenger seat in the bandwagon.

"Who are you supposed to be, Daisy Duke," I asked as I looked down at a pair of honeydew legs coming out of her tight short-shorts.

"Are you talking about my shorts or to the fact that my car door is broken," she asked.

"Both," John said.

Helen laughed and said, "Well, I guess you could say I'm wearing the mask today." Without hesitating, Helen moved quickly into business mode and gave each of us a copy of our itinerary: We were at Annie Batiste's in Cape Girardeau tonight, the Fredericksburg Freedom Festival tomorrow afternoon and then, in the Huzzah Valley on Friday and Saturday night. Finally, we would wind up back in Piankashaw for the Battle of the Bands followed by a two hour set at Quantrill's Bar and Grill.

"You guys had better get going," she said, "You have to set up before happy hour at Annie Batiste's because of their dinner crowd," Helen said.

"What's up with that," Roscoe said, "Is this a fuckin' restaurant gig?"

"If you mean a steak house," Helen said, "No, it's not a steak house. It's the hottest blues club in Cape. They have national touring bands in there, but they also serve Cajun food in their restaurant."

"Cajun food kicks ass," Roscoe said, "I can't wait to eat in that motherfucker."

"I got them to comp you your meals after you set up," Helen said, "Think of it as an early birthday present."

"How'd you know it was my birthday," Roscoe asked.

"I'm your manager," Helen said affectionately, "I'm supposed to know these things."

"Besides that," I said, "last weekend, after the show, when you managed to beat your personal best in vodka, you only told all of us fifty fuckin' times."

I smiled at Roscoe and took another drink of whiskey. Helen reached over and grabbed the bottle from my hands,

playfully took a drink and said, "I don't want to be responsible for you drinking alone." She wrapped her full lips around the mouth of the bottle slowly and then took a sip.

"I'm never alone," I said, "I have a whole host of ghosts and personal demons hanging around all the time."

"I just love his cynical melancholy personality," she said, looking over at the rest of the gang, "If we could just somehow manage to tap into his knack for being a smart ass, he would be a publicist's dream."

"Yeah, and our worst fuckin' nightmare – next to Roscoe on a twelve hour whiskey drunk," John said.

"What the fuck is melancholy," Roscoe asked.

"Someone that eats watermelons and farts," John replied, "That's why it's called melancholic."

Roscoe looked startled for a moment and then said, "Fuck you, Bon Johnny." Roscoe had a knack for integrating celebrity names into his little arsenal of insults.

When John and I were in high school, he used to like the band, Bon Jovi, and as a result, Roscoe started calling him John Bon Jovi. Somehow that evolved into Bon Johnny and Roscoe never stopped calling him that. I had a whole slew of insulting nicknames, but Roscoe had grown attached to his latest one – Leo.

"Are you guys always like this," Helen asked.

"Yes," John and A.J. said in unison.

"In that case," she said, "you could all be a publicist's dream," Helen said as she got out of the van and walked toward her red Camaro. "I gotta go. Good luck tonight."

Helen climbed into the window of her car, pulled out of the parking lot and drove back toward Pinakshaw. While the rest of the gang finished their pulled pork sandwiches, I tried to get comfortable on the top of our speaker cabinets so that I could get some sleep. The valium started kicking about the time that John put the bandwagon in gear and started backing out of *The Pig*. "This is about the closest thing to *On The Road* as we are going to get," I thought as I watched The Pig disappear out of the back windows of the bandwagon. "We're leaving one piece of the past behind us as we drive down the highway chasing another one." Slowly, I drifted off to sleep, feeling confident that when I woke up, I would be sitting outside the loading zone of Annie Batiste's in Cape Girardeau.

-William Matthew McCarter

Intaglio Landscape 1.1 x 1.2 (house)

Sounds of drinking water
slowly down river to the east
the house was almost empty in the woods
red and covered with moss

the lines fading in the sun

-Julian Haladyn

If Eyes Could Speak

There are moments in life, when we get to see behind the screen of our own eyes. In these rare moments, we realize that our interpretation is not reality. The most common of these moments is when we hear our own voice.

Our voice, which sounds so angelic to us,
sounds so foreign when it is emitted
electronically.

Why?

If the reflection of voice is different to our eyes, how can the recording of our face on the mirror be familiar to our eyes? And if we can't trust the mirror, why look into it.

I suppose, we, see and hear what we want.

Thus a person who tends to yell, to talk about drama, and lacks a rational mind, will project the negative in every, or every other, thing.

I *choose* to see the positive, even when I have to create it from fiction, even when I must lie/fake it. Because it is how something is delivered, not what is being delivered, that remains with us the most.

A soft voice speaking vulgarities is more
attractive than an OBSCENE voice speaking
praises.

To fully illustrate this point in your mind, imagine that you do not speak English for the day; go through the day listening to how people speak, how they carry themselves, and not what they are saying.

For it is in the former, that one can see into
the soul of the speaker.

Their eyes will *tell* you more
than their tongue ever could.

-Bermuda

For Whom the Bell Tolls;

a poem for Nick

at the drive-thru, hungry patrons wait
for cheesy gordita crunches,
beefy five layers,
salivating tongues click
as darting eyes scour neon menus

drive-thru-dieters
bark requests for 42 oz diet pepsis
fresco supreme steak tacos
beneath a life size Christine Dougherty

inside, the bell tolls
reminding the sweaty
nacho cheese soaked workers
another car just arrived

“Hurry up,
remember: it goes
tortilla, ground beef product,
lettuce, tomatoes and cheese.
Make sure that cheese is on top
so they know we put it on thick.”

“more sauce”
demands a sour faced woman
in a late model Buick
the tawny young man rushes
handfuls of sauce packets that read
“Why order a taco when you can ask it politely?”

-Madison Jones

Stubborn Sun

A plump summer sun tottered above the Pacific like an over-ripe blood orange ready to roll off of a kitchen counter and into a sink of dish water. He fled from the descending sun, his mind racing (how many times had he yearned to look on at this spectacle in the warmer months of his life!), and followed the signs: Interstate 10 Eastbound. He began his journey to his new life, his colder life, by turning on his radio. A bleach-blonde 80's big-hair band screamed about his losses. He changed the station. A classic rock anthem played its last few notes, and he turned off the radio, disappointed that he missed the tune. He had been on the interstate for nearly ten minutes now, but still the glow from that sunset stood frozen in his rearview mirror. He expected that driving East to escape the setting sun would make the darkness come faster, but it was still there, that shining beacon of lost memories, that sun that had set on him – over that ocean – for the last time.

Just as he glanced up at his mirror again to watch his old life fade into the salt water, he looked at the driver behind him. Her face wore the familiar innocence of his mother's, but, even more than by her resemblances, his attention was caught by the pain in her eyes and her tight grip of her wheel. He wondered what terrible thing the woman was fleeing from; how might she cope with those memories which bring so much pain to her innocent face. At that very moment he saw a light before him almost inches from his face, ready to consume him ("What is the sun doing?" he thought. "Doesn't she know that she must set as she always has? She can't follow me."), and a second later, before he even thought that the red glow looked more like a tail light, he felt his body caged, and in the same second

he saw the license plate of the car in front of him. The pain in his skull seemed to coincide with the realization that the license plate was from New York, a state he'd never seen.

He found himself looking again in his mirror, driving East to escape the stubborn sun that won't go down. It was as if he had been returned to fix a mistake, and, as before, he noticed only the innocence of the woman trailing behind him. He noticed her fears, and wondered what she ran from (why did she have to be in the same place as him!). Then, he saw the red glow of the misplaced sun, felt the cage surround his body, and, before he could even stop and put together what had happened, before he even realized that the sun was setting on the wrong side of the globe and that its glow was eerily artificial, he heard the crunch of metal, and New York flashed through his skull.

He found himself looking back again, as if he were returned to fix some mistakes, but this time smoothly, as if he were trying to make sense of a conflict. He glanced at the oppressive red glow of the real summer sun taunting him as it refused to set – the glow made everything feel so ephemeral – his mind racing (how many times had he yearned to look at this spectacle in the warmer months of his life, when his heart had not yet hardened at the thought of his past and that pesky romantic sun that teased him every night!) – the rest was a flash. The innocence became pain in the eyes trailing behind him. The red glow of the foolish sun. The cage enclosing him. The flash of New York, and the realization of his memories catching up with him: that sun will never set.

-Slick Pine

“Talking to Girls is Scary”

ultra deep mystique
subfields the ramifications—
phenomena obey
theoreticians.

preliminary assumption:
regard count her
parts olute
shuns
as multi
dime
nsional
junkslut.
junkwhore.
a junked whore for
dimes
comes plus naturel
than a walkytalky
bergvdoll.

this just in: hormones
sack nerves—add ous
to the bord
her
lands.
board them right up.
constituents dig grave
in the heart re
act
or—super regrets
introduction to conductivity.

therisnosp
accoroomt
obreathe—fing
her int
hurt le neck
pull slightly
to slyly evacuate sweat.

he he he:
me me me

No, that does not deserve a period.
And now she's pregnant with his stut-
tering ineptitude.

he art
hert
her
heart.

ridiculous ambiguity and prefab
transactions—it's amazing they're
able to communicate at all.

-David Rambo

No Say I Love You

Blemished apron
Burned wrists by

spattered oil
from wok

Hot rice
Empty chair
at table

Husband, son
and daughter

Wife over
stove fire
with red face,

gyrating hands
and spatula

We wait
She never comes

We eat
She serves

Empty seat
Full stomachs

Food is our
mother's love.

-Ryan David Leack

conversation

I drink to ease my pain
she said
I laughed
What's so funny
she asked
I drink to ease my thirst
I said
she laughed
That's what you think
she said

-Jim Bennet

With Every Word I Withhold,

The night starts like any other. And when I see you standing there I can't help but think that I have been here before. In the haze of the fog that follows, my mind searches for the fragments of dreams long since erased, replaced with newer shiner ones. But still your dull radiance continues to demur demented domains that reside in the cracks of my consciousness, and seemingly thread their way through the memories of love. Ones so fresh, now lie as savage scars.

I am on the ledge. The cavernous ravine looks up at me as I stare down into its abyss.

Jump...Jump...Jump

The breeze carries its conspiratory lines and traps them in my mind as my feet inch closer and closer. I have no choice. Your eyes cemented this path at our introduction, and now my soul must follow; for there is nothing left in my bones but the will to comply.

I transcend this space.

And as I fall, I notice that I am not getting farther away, but running closer. My feet do not take me to an empty abyss, but instead to an evergreen field of grass. Phoebus in passing lends his fading light to your face. The orange tinge that occupies the curves of every minute feature, captures me for a moment, and then another.

And when he settles home in the west and the moon finds us in the east, it is in her pale light that we will explore

Fields, Forests and Factories.

For nothing will be off limits.

To you, it is apparent that I need no saving, but on the contrary, I yearn for it; for yours, is a beautiful rescue;

And only in word may its true radiance shine.

-Bermuda

A Capital Composition of Crafthood

Grammatical games, garish glamour.
 To impress upon the aggregate collective.
 Aspiring for baroque exhibition of vapid affairs.
 Insert merely thrice?
 Unjust exercise of pure, pernicious, delusive forgoing!
 Concision, the charlatan of rococo;
 Sprezzatura, colloquial jargon of a classical mind.
 Extemporaneously formulated via impetuous soliloquy.
 A performance of decadent gilded, rhetorica.
 A covert uncouth conveyor of casuistic confabulation.
 A stronghold of sciolism.
 A hope chest of lackluster.
 An atrocity of prolix genocide.
 Signifying the strong hand of a page turning ignoramus.

-Jack Foster

Intaglio Landscape 4.25 x 4.27 (moonlight)

Finding just the right amount of pressure
too much and it all comes apart
too little and you can't keep it together

lines that are fractured pieces of the world
little bits of representation
piled one on top of another

endlessly overlapping

simple forms developing out of intuitive patterns
no way to see the sky at night without it

The moon is so bright I can see everything
including the boat I made in 3rd grade art class
floating along a black and white river

edges crumples like worn paper
the clear water reflecting my face

endlessly distorted and in movement

the white surface of the moon reflecting
textures with only the appearance of solidity

waters fading into little elements of grey
too much for the moon to handle

-Julian Haladyn

Biographies

Braydon Beaulieu

Braydon Beaulieu is a MA candidate in Creative Writing at the University of Windsor in Ontario, Canada. He once worked in a coffee shop where the owners didn't pay him on time. In fact, they still owe him about a hundred bucks. He should probably track them down and squeeze the money out of them, but hey, sometimes you just gotta let things go.

Jim Bennett

Jim Bennett lives near Liverpool in the UK and is the author of 63 books, including books for children, books of poetry, and many technical titles on transport and examinations. His poetry collections include *Drums at New Brighton* (Lifestyle 1999), *Down in Liverpool* (CD), (Long Neck 2001), *The Man Who Tried to Hug Clouds* (Bluechrome 2004 reprinted 2006), and *Larkhill* (Searle Publishing 2009). He has won many awards for his writing and performance including three DADAFest awards. He is also managing editor of www.poetrykit.org, one of the world's most successful internet sites for poets. Jim taught Creative Writing at the University of Liverpool and now tours throughout the year giving readings and performances of his work.

Bermuda

Bermuda currently absorbs English Literature and Language at Cal Poly Pomona. He can regularly be found roaming the back paths and shade-covered corners of campus. If he is not lying in the grass, he can usually be found with his head in the clouds. He can often be overheard speaking to Emerson, Henry David, Melville, Walter, and on occasion Bermuda. He currently lives in Long Beach and occasionally hangs his hat above the main streets of Pomona.

Liam Corley

Liam Corley wrote a lot of poetry during high school. In college, he wrote more. Four years after college, he stopped. He went to grad school and wrote essays instead. When he came back to his comfortable professor job at Cal Poly Pomona after being deployed to Afghanistan for a year, he started writing poetry again. Liam regularly teaches all of the writers referenced in his poem and insists that they are all American no matter what anyone else says.

Dagher Dagher

Growing up on a hill in Covina, Dagher is a bearded-kid-almost-man who wakes up confused but ready to take on the California sun. A future Construction Engineer, his classes at Cal Poly Pomona consist of constructing legos in various ways. He enjoys the occasional book, chatting with barstool romantics, and banging drums and pianos with old friends. When Bermuda, Jim Beam, and Dagher get together, they pass the time with aimless conversations about the impossible and beyond.

Leena Fitzgerald

Leena Fitzgerald is a two-time graduate of Cal Poly Pomona's EFL department. She currently teaches Composition at Chaffey College. When she is not teaching and grading papers, she sometimes works on her in-progress short story collection, *Disjoined Abortions*, and more regularly attempts to keep her flower plant, Scarlet, alive. Her home consists of too many bookshelves and she has her great-grandmother's broken violin in her bedroom.

Biographies

Jack Foster

Jack Foster is a misanthropic writer who confines himself to his bedroom where he plays the typewriter like blues piano. Assuming he can wade through his pile of whiskey bottles successfully, he manages to work as an editor for *A Few Lines Magazine* while, occasionally, going to school.

Julian Haladyn

Julian Haladyn is a Canadian writer and artist. His poems have appeared in a number of journals, as well as the collection *Nuit Blanche: Poetry for Late Nights* (2007). Haladyn has published three books of poetry: *17/13* (Blue Medium Press, 2007), which includes artwork he produced for the book, the chapbook *Convulsive Hotel Dreams* (Trainwreck Press, 2008), and *12 Bulls* (Blue Medium Press, 2007), which also combines text and artworks. Haladyn is anticipating the publication of *Fragments of a Funeral Precession*, a collection of his poems over the last thirteen years in early 2011 by Blue Medium press.

Nick Hart

Being born in a small town, moving to the big city to pursue English Literature at Cal Poly Pomona was quite the shock for Nick Hart. Though he was new to the L.A. scene, Nick quickly caught on, finding an ease within his strange love for heights. You can often find him sitting on top of the CLA building, reading and writing poetry. On certain nights, when all is quiet, he has even been known to belch out his favorite poetry to the heavens. When not appeasing his love for heights, Nick loves swimming and nature, and is often found in his favorite body of water, the duck pond, relaxing and hanging with his most cherished reptile, the turtle.

Madison Jones IV

Madison Jones is a recent graduate of the University of Montevallo. He lives in a cedar shack and spends his days playing the banjo (badly), raising chickens, and complaining about progress

Alli Kirkham

Alli Kirkham has been the art director/editor/writer/photographer/creative bitch for five publications over the course of the last ten years. She writes semi-exploitative noir cyberpunk stories, poetry that is entirely too self-indulgent, and children's books that are probably too convoluted for any actual child to read. She is also currently working on a translation of *The Canterbury Tales* which is targeted mainly toward literature majors and therefore expects that no one will ever hear of it. She is rather prickly and quick to anger, but she is a good person to know if you're waiting for the zombie apocalypse, so we keep her around.

Ryan David Leack

Teaching Associate and MA student, Ryan David Leack is the author of several collections of poetry, including *Faces in the Mirror* (2008) and *Remember the Planes* (2010). He teaches rhetoric, composition, and literature at Cal Poly Pomona, and he has published in journals such as *RipRap*, *Contemporary World Literature*, *The Cave*, and *Pif*. He is currently working on his first novel, *A Dream of Julia*, and lives a quiet life with his wife in Pomona seeking some kind of Thoreauvian tranquility and harmony with words.

Biographies

William Matthew McCarter

William Matthew McCarter is a writer and a college professor from Southeast Missouri. After completing his PhD at The University of Texas-Arlington, McCarter has been busy writing and publishing work that brings attention to his native rural America. He has recently published academic work in *The Sociological Imagination* and will be publishing "Fordism and Literacy: Where the Tin Lizzy Took Us" in *Fastcapitalism* in the summer of 2011. McCarter has also recently been chosen to publish a chapter in the book *American History through American Sports* tentatively titled "The Tobacco Spittin,' Moonshine Runnin' History of Early NASCAR."

Calvin Pennix

Calvin Pennix lives with his wife and daughter in Mission Viejo, CA where he is completing his MFA and MA in English at Chapman University. He is currently an instructor at Everest College, where he teaches Composition and Algebra and is currently completing his thesis in which he attempts to portray that imagination, art, literature and history are as real as experience. Calvin has work appearing in *UCity Review*.

Slick Pine

Not too long ago, Slick Pine was born with a silver spoon covering his infant erection. His parents took way too much LSD in the sixties and the effects surely rubbed off in his rearing; a boy without inhibitions became a man with a love for the sensations of life. The wild, living, lusty man now studies English Literature and the wonders of the human experience at Cal Poly Pomona. Though he focuses mostly on the joys of living, he gets fed up

at times with the banality of everything and falls into a sort of depression; he loves that sensation all the same.

David Rambo

David Rambo currently studies English at UC Davis.

Eric William Strege

Eric William Strege has been called many things - abrasive, imperious, obtrusive, esoteric - not the least of which have come from his own mother. He prefers to compose, stoically, within the bowels of asylums and morgues where he, in his down time, practices experimental pathology. An implementer of Jungian Psychoanalytic Theory, Eric William Strege once masqueraded as a certified psychiatrist, treating an array of individuals of prominence such as Colin Meloy and John Banville, including - regretfully - an unsuccessful session with Bill Clinton regarding sex addiction. A vehement analyst of Joyce, Waugh, and Faulkner, Eric openly admits to having Freudian dreams about all three. A composer of swirling, elegant prose, replete with auras of sultry exoticism and atmospheres of moral claustrophobia, Eric's preeminence is inexorable.

Jennifer Yung

Jennifer Yung is a Chicago-based illustrator and graphic designer currently in New York City. She does work mainly in watercolor, ink, and digital mediums. Her artwork ranges from highly rendered illustrations to abstract oil paintings but all come from a common interest of narration through representation. Jennifer has studied art throughout most of her life and continues to pursue a career in the illustration field.

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